

California Labor School

The **California Labor School (CLS)**, formerly the **Tom Mooney Labor School** (renamed in 1945),^[1] was an educational house in **San Francisco** from 1942 to the 1950s. rector and Holland Roberts was the first education director for this “people’s school.”^[1] The school was founded in August 1942, in premises above a car saleroom at 678 Turk Street, and named for labor leader **Tom Mooney** who had died on 6 March that year. It later moved to a 5-storey building at 216 Market Street, and in 1947 bought premises at 240 Golden Gate Avenue.^[2]

The school was supported by 72 trade unions, members of the **American Federation of Labor** and the **Congress of Industrial Organizations**.^[1] Its initial program “promised to analyze social, economic and political questions in light of the present world struggle against fascism”.^[2] It also taught the arts: the teenage **Maya Angelou** had a scholarship to study dance and drama.^[3] The school taught students on many subjects such as labor organization, journalism, music, drama, history, women’s studies, economics and industrial arts.^[1] The union officials and professors from **Stanford University** and the **University of California at Berkeley** taught the courses at CLS.^[1] The most popular course at the CLS called “Mental Hygiene Today” was taught by **Erik Erikson**.^[4] The most important history course was called “History and Problems of the Negro in America.”^[4] The school offered different kinds of services such as preparing union pamphlets and newspapers, conducting dance concerts and theatrical shows at local meetings.^[4]

From 1945 to 1947 the school was accredited for veterans’ education under the **G.I. Bill of Rights**, and by 1947 there were 220 full-time students, among the 1800 students attending 135 classes. In 1948 the school was placed on the **Subversive List** and attendances declined. The school closed in the 1950s.^[2]

Archives of the school’s material are held in the Labor Archives & Research Center of **California State University**^[5] and the **University of Michigan**.^[1]

1 See also

- **Rand School of Social Science** (1906)
- **Work People’s College** (1907)
- **Brookwood Labor College** (1921)
- **New York Workers School** (1923):

- **New Workers School** (1929)
- **Jefferson School of Social Science** (1944)

- **Highlander Research and Education Center** (formerly **Highlander Folk School**) (1932)
- **San Francisco Workers’ School** (1934)
 - **California Labor School** (formerly **Tom Mooney Labor School**) (1942)
- **Continuing education**
- **Los Angeles People’s Education Center**^[6]

2 References

- [1] “Finding Aid for the California Labor School Records, 1942-1955”. University of Michigan: Special Collections Library. Retrieved 15 April 2013. *Includes several paragraphs about the school*
- [2] “California Labor School”. Social Networks and Archival Context Project. Retrieved 15 April 2013.
- [3] “Biography”. *Official Website*. Maya Angelou. Retrieved 15 April 2013.
- [4] Robert W., Cherny (2004). “East and West Coast Communist Schools”. In William, Issel; Kieran Walsh, Taylor. *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Politics*. New Jersey: Rutgers University. pp. 207–208. ISBN 0-8135-3403-8.
- [5] “Inventory of the California Labor School Collection, 1942 - 1957”. Online Archive of California. Retrieved 15 April 2013.
- [6] “Re: Workmen’s Educational Association - San Francisco”. H-LABOR@H-NET.MSU.EDU. 26 July 2000. Retrieved 7 February 2016.

3 External sources

- Jenkins, David (1993). *The Union Movement, the California Labor School, and San Francisco Politics, 1926-1988* (transcription as manuscript in PDF). oral history interview with Lisa Rubens. Retrieved 13 July 2016.

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